

Cassandra

Cassandra speaks truth, always.
The whispering onlookers point and stare.
She's crazy, they mutter
and (by implication) I'm all right.
I'm not like her.

In due course the calamities Cassandra mentioned
occur.
Shall we have a party and celebrate her fine gifts?
Oh no, there's panic in the streets.
Why did nobody warn us they all scream.
Those in authority, they ought to know better.
How are we supposed to cope with disaster
When nobody shows us how?

In her room, watching the burning city,
Cassandra weeps.
Her power was granted by a god.
But what is power if it is powerless.
All the bleeding corpses lying there
Could have been saved.
There was no need for this slaughter,
If only people had listened.

There on the floor the woman knew
Her own power had been slighted, blighted
By the bitter strength of her own destructive self.
The people laughed
Because *she* did not take herself seriously.

Although she uttered the prophecies
She did not believe them herself.
The words came through her.
She forgot them as quick as she dared.
How can anyone face the truth, she wondered,
When it is so appalling.

I want to be safe, where people like me.
Where the easy blur of conversation lulls.
No drama, no hysterics, no sudden alarms.
But what is this?
Everyone's fallen asleep. Boredom? Apathy? despair?
Are they all dead then?

The doctor examined the corpses.
He smiled sheepishly.
I cannot discover the cause of death.

But Cassandra knew.
They have all died from never having lived,
From the sheer blank refusal to ever breathe
The pure light of the universe.
Their noses lost the power to sniff the green
Their eyes drooped, unaware of all that blue.

Parrots, cock-chafers, thrushes, even tits,
Gossip and chatter among the branches.
The lifeless ones have all been covered up.
Last year's leaves hide them.
We don't want to have *that* sort of scandal
Spread about. We don't want anyone to know
That there is more to life than 'normality'
Adjustment, everyone 'shrunk to fit'.

Over the hollow marshes
Where the night-birds swoop
Cassandra strides on, bellowing into the darkness.

Antonia Boll



THE IS—NESS NEEDS AWARENESS

The *is*-ness of is
And the *you*-ness of you
Is all that I need
To know what to do.

But if *shoulds* fog my is
And *ifs* mist my you
I shan't get what I need
Whatever I do.

So the heart of the business
Is to start with the *is*-ness
And be open and true
To the *you*-ness of you.

Aware and unjudging, together and free
Is how I may grow to the *me*-ness of me.

V.M.

KNICKS KNOT

I'm ill.
But how ill do you have to be to be ill enough to be ill.
I feel ill.
But they do not feel that I'm ill.

I must convince them I am ill
So I must show them how ill I am.

But if I show them how ill I am, I am putting on an act
If I am putting on an act I am not genuinely ill
If I do not put on an act they will not see how ill I am.

I feel ill. They do not feel that I am ill.
I must be ill to feel ill
When I am not ill
Because they do not feel that I am ill.

Nick Owen